

MEDIA RELEASE

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International gathering debates future food capacity of agriculture

Innovative young farmers from around the world will gather in Melbourne in February to discuss the capacity of agriculture to meet the global demand for food over the next 10 to 20 years.

This issue is the key theme for the 2008 Nuffield Contemporary Scholars Conference, which will bring together 45 recently-selected Nuffield Scholars from Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, the USA and Brazil.

Nuffield Australia Chief Executive Officer Jim Geltch said Australia's selection to host the 2008 conference reflected well on the reputation of the country's agricultural sector. He said although Nuffield had existed as an international farming scholarship foundation for more than 50 years, this was only the third contemporary scholars conference. The first was held in the Netherlands in 2006, and last year it was held in Calgary, Canada.

"Australia has some great initiatives within the Nuffield network, and as a farming destination we are doing a lot of innovative things; we have a lot to offer the visiting scholars," Mr Geltch said. "We have also been able to secure major sponsorship for the conference from Bayer CropScience, a company that leads international agriculture in research and development.

"Many of the young farmers taking part are also leaders within their own farm industries and will be at the cutting edge of international agriculture in the coming years."

The conference will give participants an overview of global agriculture and trade issues, with presentations from successful agricultural business owners and managers. They will consider the challenges and opportunities, business structures, resource efficiency and key performance indicators for agriculture in the future.

It will also be an opportunity to showcase Australian agriculture. Starting in Melbourne on Sunday February 24, the conference includes three days of visits to Victorian farming operations in the Mornington Peninsula, South Gippsland, central Victoria and the Goulburn Valley.

The Contemporary Scholars Conference then joins the annual Nuffield Australia Autumn Tour, in Echuca on Friday February 29, where returning Australian scholars will provide an overview of their travels and research. Further farm tours are planned for the final two days of the conference, which winds up on Sunday March 2.

Mr Geltch said the aim of the week was to develop and enhance international networks, and many of the scholars would continue with global research tours on their chosen topics following the conference.

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